

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: John T. Ushijima

John T. Ushijima was born March 13, 1924 in Hilo, Hawai'i. He was educated at Hilo High School; Grinnell College, in Iowa; and George Washington Law School, where he received his degree in 1952. During World War II, he served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Ushijima entered private practice in 1953 with the law firm Pence and Ushijima (later called Ushijima and Nakamoto). He was the director of American Security Bank, and the Royal State National Insurance Company.

In 1968, Ushijima was a delegate to the constitutional convention. He was elected as a Democrat to the state senate in 1959 and was the senate president from 1975 to 1978. He retired from the senate in 1982.

Tape Nos. 17-25-1-89 and 17-26-1-89

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

John Ushijima (JU)

October 27, 1989

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Larry Meacham (LM) and Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with John Ushijima. It took place on October 27, 1989 at the Hawai'i Public Television studios. The interviewers were Larry Meacham and Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto. This is videotape number one.

LM: Videotape number one. Interviewing Senator John Ushijima. Senator, where and when were you born?

JU: I was born in Hilo, 1924, March the 13th.

LM: What did your parents do?

JU: My parents were immigrants from Japan, and they were in their own private business.

LM: What sort of business?

JU: They were in the tofu business.

LM: They made tofu?

JU: They made tofu.

LM: Okay.

JU: Very nutritious today.

LM: When they came over, did they work in the plantations at first or . . .

JU: Well, I think they came over as laborers, but I don't recall my father [Buhachi] or mother [Sano (Nitahara)] ever telling me that they worked in any plantation because as far as I recall, they were living in Hilo. My father was a stevedore and after that, he got into his own business.

LM: Did he get involved in politics or community affairs at all?

- JU: No, no. You know, they were immigrants to Hawai'i, so the language was entirely alien. All what I knew was that he was an ex-soldier of the [Japanese] imperial army.
- LM: Was he involved in Japanese community associations and stuff like that?
- JU: Yeah, he belonged to several organizations, especially the prefectural organization. I remember going to picnics.
- LM: Was he just a member? Was he ever an officer of those or . . .
- JU: I don't know whether he was an officer, but he was pretty active.
- LM: Okay. And where did you go to school?
- JU: I had my grammar and high school education in Hilo. I attended Hilo High School, graduated in 1941.
- LM: And what were you like as a high school student?
- JU: What was that?
- LM: When you were a high school student, what sort of student were you? Were you . . .
- JU: Well, I . . .
- LM: . . . studious, rowdy?
- JU: Well, I liked to play. I played football, I was very—I was a sport enthusiast and I took college preparatory program, you know, foreign languages, et cetera, but I don't remember studying too hard. (Chuckles)
- LM: Well that was a—so you were ambitious for your day to think of college then, yeah?
- JU: Yeah, I was thinking of going to school.
- LM: And your parents, no doubt, encouraged you in that?
- JU: Oh yes.
- LM: Yeah.
- JU: Oh, yeah.
- LM: Did you get involved in school politics at all?
- JU: Yeah, I was student body vice-president, and I was a class president, I think, once. So I suppose I started my politics early.
- LM: Ah, and when did you graduate?

JU: I graduated in 1941, just before the war.

LM: So what happened then when the war developed?

JU: Well, when I got out, I barely made seventeen, you know, my birthday was March, and so I barely made seventeen, and then I wanted to go to school in the Mainland. And my parents felt that I was a little too young, so they told me to stay out a year, and of course, it was very uncertain times at that, during those months after my graduation. I could have gone to [the University of Hawai'i] Mānoa, but I felt that if I go here, then I might be stuck, so I decided to stay back one year. But unfortunately, December, the war started.

LM: And what happened to you after the war started?

JU: By then, I found work at American Factors [later Amfac] in Hilo, in the office, and I stayed there during the war years, early war years. Then in 1943, when they asked for volunteers for the 442nd [Regimental Combat Team], then I volunteered. I think I barely made eighteen at that time, yes.

LM: So you went in the 442nd, and where did you train?

JU: Well, I was [in] the original contingent, the first group that left Hawai'i in early 1943. We trained in Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

LM: How about the rest of your family, brothers and sisters?

JU: Well, I had an older brother who was already in the service. He was with the 100th [Infantry Battalion] at that time. He was in the service prior to the war breaking out in 1941. My oldest brother, of course, was born in Japan, so he was not eligible for any military service.

LM: And was he in the 100th all through the war also?

JU: My older brother?

LM: Yeah.

JU: Yes, yes. He fought all the way. He was injured or got wounded in Cassino, [Italy] and when I went overseas, I met him, and he was wondering what I was doing there, kid brother, you know.

LM: Any other brothers and sisters?

JU: I have two sisters above me and a younger sister below me.

LM: What did they end up doing?

JU: My older sister used to be a—well, she went to, not to college, but she went to commercial college, and she was the secretary for Judge Martin Pence. My other sister worked in the court, and my younger sister graduated from the University of Wisconsin, and she presently lives in New York.



LM: Um, back to the war, were you injured in the war?

JU: Well, I wouldn't say I was injured. (Chuckles) We might have had some shrapnels, but not very seriously.

LM: Okay. So when the war got—war finished, and you folks got out, what did you do then?

JU: Oh, when the war finished, we were demobilized. I came back in January of 1945 to Hawai'i. And in the meantime, I was going back to school in Iowa, Grinnell College, and I waited a while, and went back during the fall.

LM: So did you know any of your veteran buddies at Grinnell?

JU: No.

LM: Were you all, I guess, had you all decided to go back to school? Was that the general feeling when you were finishing up your service?

JU: I would think so. I think because of the experiences that we went through, I think there was this eagerness for continuation of education. I don't think that most of us felt like coming back to Hawai'i and just taking another job. I think most of us wanted to acquire some knowledge, acquire some education, and perhaps that's the only way we can do service to the state of Hawai'i if we ever did come back.

MK: Senator, when you first made up your mind to go to college, what aspirations or plans did you have?

JU: Well, I want—I basically wanted to study law.

LM: Why?

JU: I was pretty close to the legal profession because of Judge Pence, and I felt that was one area that perhaps I could do something with myself.

MK: I think in an earlier conversation you mentioned that Martin Pence, in a sense, was your mentor.

JU: Oh yeah, he was very close to our family since my sister also was his secretary, and whenever he ran for office—I think he was one of the early Democrats in Hawai'i [county], he ran for county attorney. I remember campaigning for him, you know, just a little boy passing out cards. And I think Tom Okino, at that time, also was a county attorney [prosecutor], so I got pretty close to these people. Of course, I was still very young. And like anything else, you get impressed by what they do, and perhaps feel that you want to do the same thing as you grow up. If they were baseball players, perhaps, I'd want to be a baseball player. (MK chuckles.) But fortunately, you know, they were in the legal profession, so I felt that law school was where I wanted to go to.

LM: What was the general feeling among the veterans coming back about Hawai'i and about the future of Hawai'i and their role in Hawai'i?

JU: Well I think whenever you go away, you see Hawai'i in a little different perspective. And invariably, you know, you get to sit down and discuss things, and you talk about what you're going to do, what's going to happen when you get back there. And I think most of us felt that we want to come back and do something worthwhile. Something to change the economic, social areas that we felt should be changed. And I think that's the reason why so many of them decided that, perhaps, law was a vehicle that they should get into. Once you get into medicine, of course, you know, you're rather restricted. But when you get into law, with a background that you have, there's just about anything that you can get into—business, you want to practice law, yes, you practice law. I think the background is there for you to get into just about any area that you want to.

LM: Was there any party orientation then? Did people feel they should go Republican or Democrat or . . .

JU: Well, at that time, Hawai'i was predominantly Republican. And you had that plantation mentality, and you had the Big Five [the five companies that controlled the sugar industry in Hawai'i] mentality. And with the limited amount of education that we had at that time, just out of high school, I think we knew that something was not right, that people had been restricted insofar as fulfilling their aspirations. And the funny thing is that when you get away, you look at things in a little different light. You know, the perspective is a little different. Hawai'i is just a small little place in the Pacific. And you think of things that you can do to, perhaps, better the general welfare of the people. And I think there was this burning desire to change things. And you can do it in an evolutionary way, not through revolution, you know. There were those elements when I came back, you know, the unions became very aggressive, and they wanted change overnight or things of that sort. I think we were more along [the] thinking that things could be done through the political arena. And I think that's the reason why so many of us came back, as I said, in 1954, I think, was the first time when they were ready to run for office. And this is where, I think, the whole impetus began. People got interested in politics, people got involved.

LM: Did you—would you say you picked any of that up in high school, were you learning about American democracy in high school?

JU: Oh, yeah. You go to school, you learn. I think education, they say, is perhaps a dangerous thing. I used to read a lot, and I found out that there was this movement, basically, to not educate the people, especially in the plantation areas. You'd be surprised if you look at the history of Hawai'i, even on my island, there weren't too many high schools. You know, you had scattered high schools. And then when I start looking at it, and looking at some of the speeches that some of these people used to make, they say education is very dangerous, and it's better not to have educated people around because, you know, you gotta keep 'em in the plantation, you gotta have them working in the fields. And I think that was their philosophy. In other words, labor was something that they can exploit, you know. And I think these are the things that we slowly learned while we were there [overseas]. And of course, that grew—a great determination came to do away with this kind of thinking when you get away. So, I don't know whether they taught me anything in high school, about doing this or doing that, but I think what we learned was that, through politics, much can be done.

LM: Okay. You went to Grinnell, were there any fellow veterans there? Other 442nd or 100th guys there?

JU: No, not that I recall. There were some veterans, but they were marines.

(Laughter)

LM: So were you the only Hawai'i guy there?

JU: Well, there were a couple of people, I didn't know them. There was—later on, there was two people that came in from 'Iolani [School], after my junior year. But when I went there, there were all veterans coming back from the Pacific War.

MK: Senator, why did you choose Grinnell College?

JU: Grinnell is—I wanted to get in the Midwest. I didn't want to go to a big school, and because I used to go to church. And Grinnell, I think, was affiliated with the Congregational Church. Of course, it's non-sectarian now, or when I went, but it was originally started [by the] Congregational Church, and because of that church connection, perhaps, I felt inclined to go there. But not only that, it had a little better reputation than the others. So, I felt that if I'm going to spend some money, I might as well go to a place where my money's worth spending.

LM: And a . . .

JU: If they accepted me, yes.

LM: It's a good school but a small school, so it's an unusual choice, I think that's . . .

JU: Yeah, I think I made a wise choice because they were very strong in liberal arts. And very liberal. Grinnell has always had that reputation. I think they were [among] the first to have a Black student body, I mean, Black students in the student body. We never had any fraternities, they frowned upon fraternities. We used to have halls, but not those national societies, fraternities. So we were very progressive in that respect. So whether you're rich or poor, you can't have a car on campus to equalize everybody, you know.

LM: Interesting.

JU: Otherwise, everybody would be—the rich ones would be driving around in the nice cars. They made certain that everybody's treated equally. You didn't know who was rich and who was poor.

MK: You know at Grinnell, how did you support yourself and your education?

JU: The veterans' stipend that we received [under the G.I. Bill], that helped a great deal, but I think at Grinnell, it wasn't sufficient to take care of everything, tuition and learning expenses, so I worked. And of course, I had a little help from home. But I worked in the kitchen, a waiter. I don't know how much they paid me, about thirty or thirty-five cents an hour, you know, or thereabouts.

LM: So you worked all the way through Grinnell?

JU: Yeah. Well, I made enough money to come home during the summer, enough for transportation back and forth.

LM: And then after Grinnell, where did you go?

JU: Then I went to George Washington University Law School. I, in the meantime, of course, I was supposed to go to Yale. I applied for Yale University Law School, but at that time, you know, once you're accepted, you have to put up a bond to be sure (chuckles) that you get there. And I looked at that bond, I forgot how much it was, I got scared because—and also, when I graduated from Grinnell [in 1950], I applied for a [U.S.] State Department job. You know they had a State Department, some kind of a training program, and I was very impressed that they pay you \$3,000 a year while you learned. (Chuckles) So, I applied for that, and in the meantime, I was in Hawai'i, and they told me, State Department told me that I should have been in the Mainland for my interview in San Francisco. I said I'm not going to take a trip there just for this interview. In the meantime, I went to Washington [D.C.] to talk to the State Department people, and there I was waiting. In the meantime, school was just beginning, so I went to the nearest law school I could find, and that was George Washington in Washington, D.C.

LM: And were there other Hawai'i veterans there?

JU: Oh, yeah.

LM: Who?

JU: That's where I met a host of Hawai'i people. They thought I was from the Mainland. And fortunately I was a veteran, so I knew some of the veterans at that time. Dan [Daniel K.] Inouye was there. I think we were in the same class. And George Takane who was a clerk of the [state] house [of representatives]. We sat alphabetically, you know, T, U, so I sat beside George. And there was George Holt, [John R.] Desha, [Shigeto] Kanemoto, who was a former clerk of the house, Alvin Shim, Sumio Nakashima. There were quite a few. Katsugo Miho.

LM: Okay, we have to switch tapes, then we'll continue.

JU: Mm hmm [yes].

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is continuation of interview with John Ushijima. This is videotape number two.

LM: This is tape two. Go ahead.

JU: Well, it's because I believe it's my father's background that he never objected to my volunteering for the United States Army. My brother was already in, and something tells me, as I recall, that I think he was proud of my volunteering and being in the service. He never discouraged me as a matter of fact. There was nothing but encouragement. So I suppose he knew what war was, and he knew what we were getting into, but he never said anything. And for us, there was no question that we were going in for combat. It's not just get in the service

and driving a truck. I think we were going in with the basic understanding that they were going to use us as combat soldiers. And, of course, when you're young, eighteen, (chuckles) you don't know what war is all about until the first bullet flies, and the first shell breaks. Then you pray, and you say, "What am I doing? My God." But after you get through with that, it's all right. But it's not easy to face death. And that's what it is. When you go to war, you're facing death. Some people break. I don't think there are brave men in combat; but I think it's just matter of pride. You don't run away, gotta do your job.

LM: Well, especially you guys had something to prove, huh?

JU: That's right. I think that's the reason why, I think, there was a little pride, and I think that's what made our unit a very capable combat unit. War can never be fought unless you had pride. That's the reason why they try to instill the esprit de corps, you know, whether it's marine corps, any kind of special services, the parachuters. They always say you're elite, you're the best, you know. They try to instill that in you so you have your—you have that pride. And that's what makes a combat unit go. We fought with the Black soldiers in Italy, the 92nd division, and you can see that they didn't care. They never had pride. As a matter of fact, they were just wondering what they were doing over there. They never thought of sacrificing anything to obtain a goal, you know. So basically, they never had too much to fight for. You don't blame 'em. And we had a whole division there in Italy. We were attached to them. We used to have lots of fun with them. They were wondering why we fight so hard, you know. All what they wanted to do was go home. I wanted to go home, too.

MK: Senator, before the second tape went on, we were talking about differences between the Mainland AJAs [Americans of Japanese Ancestry] and the Hawai'i AJAs. Can you again talk about that difference?

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

MK: Senator, before the second tape went on, we were talking about the differences between the Mainland AJAs and the Hawai'i AJAs in terms of their plans on what to do when they came back. Can you comment on that again?

JU: Yeah, I made many friends with Mainland AJAs that were in our outfit, you know, from Seattle, Utah, Los Angeles. And I think their ambition, basically was, because of the upheaval that their families went through, you know, losing their farms or their homes [through internment], and I think their greatest ambition, basically, was to go back and recoup. Go back and lead the kind of life that they led before. I don't think there was a burning desire on their part to go get education and to change the status quo, or to fight the injustices that they felt. They were more, they were more—I don't think they had the kind of spirit that we had. You know, we were more volatile in our thinking, that's the reason why we got in so much trouble. I think it's because of the uniqueness of our background and of being in a very small community where we got to know each other.

And when you're over there, you know, you can't afford to be called a coward, and you can't afford to be doing anything that might reflect upon your family. You see, those things were very strong with us, and I think that's one of the reasons why we never had people, you know, deserting, or things of that sort. I think it's our better background. You had friends, you don't want to go back to Hawai'i and say, you know that guy, he was no-good soldier, or

he ran away or he was a coward. Those things happened, even to this day, even my company, we had individuals that really never performed up to par, and even when we meet today, you know, they're sort of ostracized to a certain extent, and they feel it, too, and they know why. It's because they never performed the way they were supposed to. And there are situations like that. They don't come around.

LM: So [you] graduated [from] George Washington, and then what did you do?

JU: I graduated George Washington in 1952, then I came back, studied for the bar [examination], and passed my bar, and then I went to practice with Judge [Martin] Pence in Hilo. I think he just got out of the bench at that time, he was circuit court judge. He went into private practice, and I practiced law with him, up to 1962.

LM: What sort of law were you doing? Just general practice?

JU: It's just general practice.

LM: So . . .

JU: I did quite a bit of trial work at that time, too.

LM: Did you get involved in politics as soon as you got back or how did that happen?

JU: Well, when you got back here, of course, you know this whole political upheaval was being generated internally. And 1954 came about, and of course, you know we had a big election and lots of people were running. Nelson Doi was, I think, county attorney [1953-54] or deputy county attorney [1949-53], and we wanted to get some young fellow in office, and we persuaded Nelson to run. And it was [a] tough race in the senate because there were two seats, as I recall, and there were two incumbents, Senator [William H. "Doc"] Hill and Senator Tom Okino. And there was room for only two, and Nelson jumped in. Hill was a Republican; Nelson and Okino were Democrats. And I strongly believe that if both of them worked together, Hill would have stayed home [been defeated], but unfortunately, it never worked out that way. There was lots of cross fire, accusations (chuckles), and when the cloud settled, Nelson won and Okino stayed home. So Hill, and Doi won that seat that was up in East Hawai'i in 1954.

LM: So what did you do in Doi's campaign?

JU: Well I was his campaign manager. Went around making speeches all over the island. In those days, we never depended on TV. There was radio, some radio activity. It was mostly person-to-person kind of campaign, going to all of the voting precincts making speeches, shaking hands, getting to know people, trying to sell your candidate.

LM: So did you have, say, a rally and all the candidates would come and all speak?

JU: Oh yeah, there was lots of fun those days, you know, the Republicans used to have their rallies, and we used to follow them or they follow us into all of these precincts. And we used to have about two or three rallies a day, even three a day, from one area to another area, and spend the night. And the following day, start all over again until you go around the entire



island. And that's mostly in the primary, as well as the general election. And those days, politics was very personal. Speech making was very important. People were impressed whether that person could verbalize, could hold his own, could explain things. I think they were very impressed with that, and Nelson impressed people with his oratory, and that's the reason why, I think, he really got the kind of votes he did.

LM: How would you organize that? So you're the manager?

JU: Yeah.

LM: Say, what's—how would you organize today's three stops?

JU: No, we had, we set up all our campaign committees in just about every precinct. You know, we had to go around the island, look at the precinct list. We got to know people, then we start hiring people to work for Nelson, not for pay. (Laughs) When I say "hiring," I say persuading these people to get involved in politics, and get them on a list. We have contact with them. We go out there, we tell them to bring out their friends, and take [him] around, house to house during the day. And that's how we try to sell our candidate. Every candidate is doing that. They have their strong supporters. They have their detractors. We know who's friendly, and which one is, quote, enemy. We know who were Republicans. The whole idea was really trying to reach as many people as possible, and sell your candidate. And I think we had an advantage to a certain degree because we were young, and you know, we try to get the young people involved.

MK: You know, I . . .

JU: They call us the Young Turks at that time.

MK: You know in that particular election, what role did, say, the union, the ILWU [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] have, or what role did the official Democratic party have?

JU: Well, the Democratic party was very well organized because they're the ones that set up the campaign rallies. They have their own officials. They're the ones that get the crowd out. They're the ones that publicize it. They're the ones that would set up everything, okay.

On the other hand, the ILWU, which was not part of the Democratic party, still played a very large role because when you get in the plantations, the ILWU, most of these members are ILWU. You get out in the districts, at that time, there was a big cleavage, or there were demarcation line between supervisory and rank-and-file. The supervisory people were more Republican inclined. The rank-and-file were more Democratically inclined. So you could see that cleavage very easily. Not that, you know, amongst families, there was the split. And we had more people to deal with, and I think this is where the strength began. The Democratic party, and the ILWU really, in the plantations, played a pretty big role. The funny thing is that they weren't part of the Democratic party because they did endorse Republicans as well. You know, I think Doc Hill was endorsed by ILWU. And I don't know which, Doi or Okino was endorsed. Or otherwise they made it open.

LM: I think Doi said they left it open.

JU: Yeah.

LM: So who was running the party in the Big Island?

JU: We had a [Democratic] party [county] chairman [Robert Yamada, 1954—replaced by William Gonsalves in June 1954], I just can't recall. . . .

LM: But it was a strong organization?

JU: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah. By that time, by that time, we really had an organization.

LM: Was it pretty much lined up behind John Burns or . . .

JU: Oh yeah. Well, Burns was, I think, the top candidate. And this was basically Burns' organization, you see, then we just supplemented it with our own personal political organization, if you want to call it that. That's the reason why we became so strong because everybody had—you have to have your own army, you know, to be loyal to you, number one. But on the top, of course, as far as Burns was concerned, we all supported him. He was the titular head. He was the most important person that we wanted to get elected [as delegate to Congress], and everything was just working out that way, going in.

LM: And so he's the one that would set up the organization on the Big Island, too?

JU: Yeah, his lieutenants. His lieutenants would contact—see, they have to find out what's happening on other islands, so guys like [Dan] Aoki, even [Mike] Tokunaga, they used to keep pretty well [in] contact with the various people and they can work by sense, the factions. And the whole idea is to weld them all together during election time. At that time, you know, Tom [Thomas P.] Gill's faction was basically on their own, too. They were Democrats, but they weren't really a part, I would say, of the Burns faction or the ILWU faction. Even the unions were split because you had other unions involved.

LM: How about the—how about voter registration? After 1952 [with the McCarran Act], the status of the issei changed. Did you folks do [register] a lot of immigrants?

JU: Oh, yeah. Registration was something that we worked very strongly on, try to register voters. And I think this is one of the areas where we enlarged the participation as far as voting was concerned. People up till that time really never voted. Once they received their naturalization papers, people would go out and register [them]. When they register, they're sort of loyal to you first, you know. You can tell them, "Please vote for me." [We] just sent our people out for registration purposes.

LM: All right. Did you have any trouble with the plantations campaigning or voter registration?

JU: Well, I would say, from '54 on, I think it was a little more open. Prior to 1954 during the territorial days, because the plantation managers were so strongly entrenched with the Republican party that they never allowed the Democrats to use certain halls, let's say, or certain areas. As a matter of fact, the Democrats were barred from certain places and they had to sneak in to have their rallies. This is before, before the war, especially.



LM: Did---in the [19]50s, there was a lot of McCarthyism on the Mainland. Were Democrats getting attacked about that here? I mean, candidates like Doi and so forth, were the Republicans using [communism] against them?

JU: No, I don't think, I don't think there was that kind of personal attacks here.

LM: Did they use it against . . .

JU: I think the only time there was really any kind of attacks such as that was during the ILWU trials when they had the Smith Act [forbade the advocacy of the violent overthrow of the U.S. government] trials, and when they had a broom brigade [during the 1949 dock strike, prominent women opposing the strike carried brooms with signs attached which urged strikers to go back to work]. You know the Republican, I mean, the plantation mentality and the plantation—the people that were strongly entrenched with that group started attacking people, but not—I don't recall any politician basing or leading attack because of being a Democrat.

LM: Okay, we have to change tapes again.

MK: Okay.

END OF SIDE ONE

## SIDE TWO

JC: The following is a continuation of the Ushijima interview. This is videotape number three.

MK: Okay. This is tape three with Senator Ushijima. Okay, maybe we can continue with our discussion of Big Island politics, and maybe we can start with a discussion of the prominent politicians back then, of say, late [19]30s, [19]40s, early [19]50s.

JU: Well, when I was in high school, in Hawai'i, where I lived, it was predominantly Republican. The legislature or the elected officials, the county government was Republican, and the Republican party was the predominant party when I was in high school, that is, before the war. And for any Democrat to be elected was unthinkable. And as I recall, when you had people like Tom Okino that came back, you know, he graduated from Harvard [University], he became a deputy county attorney; Kazuhisa Abe; Martin Pence played a big role because he was White. And the Republican organization was White. And you would think how a White person could be a Democrat? When he ran for county attorney and defeated the incumbent William Beers, who was entrenched in there for about twenty, thirty years, I think that was the awakening, basically, of the Democratic party as an opposition party. And these things were slowly building up, and the war came.

By the time the war was over, of course, you know, we had lots of other people then being on the, quote, loyal opposition, and that is the Democratic party. And this is where you had, together with the growth of the political activity of the ILWU, I think everything just meshed together. And the, quote, Democratic party rose up, and it showed its strength there in 1954. And it was because of various factors that I mentioned. Things were just ripe because up till

that point, of course you know, Hawai'i was a pretty closed society. Everything was tokenism, you know, you can never think of sitting on a board of directors of a big company or be anywhere up in the top. They might put you [in] as a token representative of the vast majority, but still, you're not gaining any kind of respect, you never earned it, kind of situation, so.

I think what we really wanted to do was open up that society a little more so that we get a little better mobility based upon ability. And to a certain extent, I think we did it. But to me, looks like we're getting back to the old days again. (Chuckles) I see the cycle coming around, you know, with the changing complexion of our population. We have so many newcomers coming in again that sometimes I wonder as to whether we're just running around in circles because they don't really understand what happened before. You know, they bring in their prejudices and their likes and dislikes and everything else, and you can see that, you know, attitudes. Anytime you have any kind of public display, whether it's a new thing that they want in geothermal [energy], let's say, or the space launch site on our island and things of that sort, people get very disturbed because, you know, they come from a different background. And these are the things that they want to avoid as much as possible, so I don't know where—sometimes we're getting just back to where we started. But we don't have that many local people by then anyway, so it doesn't make too much difference, I suppose. But the young generation today, they live in a different world, not the kind of world that we were accustomed to.

MK: You know going back to a time when Martin Pence defeated Beers, I think back in 1938, that sort of vitalized the Democratic party on the Big Island.

JU: I think so, yeah. People, yeah, people became interested in joining the party. They weren't afraid to say that they're Democrats. Up to that point, you know, you used to hide and say, "I'm not," you know. You don't come out and say that you're a Democrat.

LM: How come . . .

JU: You'd be ostracized.

LM: How come he won if the Republicans were so strong?

JU: Oh, Pence was a good campaigner. He campaigned. He had a following, you know. People liked him. He was a different kind of campaigner. He was very strong on the podium and he could get along with people, you know, so. He was a new kind of White man that came along trying to lead. Oh, you look at his campaign days, you look at old papers, they'll tell you, especially the local papers. It's a phenomenal thing that he beat the incumbent.

MK: You know in addition to his example as a winning Democrat, what else did he do to kind of get the Democratic party moving on the Big Island as more people became . . .

JU: Well, I think more people came out and tried to openly say that they're Democrats.

LM: Was he actively involved in the party, getting the people?

JU: At that time, yes, before the war, yeah. And I think he was recognized for that, and then you

know, when [John F.] Kennedy became president, he appointed Pence as a federal judge, one of the first appointments that came about in 1962.

LM: How about Doc Hill? How would you . . .

JU: Oh, Doc Hill was a Republican through and through, but I don't think he was the kind that really wanted to build up the party for philosophical reasons. He was more economically interested in his business. And although he's a self-professed Republican, he—sometimes you wonder as to whether some of the things that he did were really what a Republican would do. Oh, he was very independent. As a matter of fact, he espoused the ILWU. He wanted the ILWU endorsement, you know, things of that sort. If you're a true Republican, I don't think you would do it, you know. But Doc Hill was very practical. He was a very practical politician. And because of that, people that supported him were all his employees, whether they're Democrats or not, you know, economically, they had to. You know, you don't blame 'em; it's bread and butter. And this is the strength of his organization. He had many, many employees. [If] I have that many employees, I'll be perpetually reelected every year. (Chuckles) Three, four, five hundred campaign workers, it's easy. Going all over the island.

LM: What was his relationship to the, I mean, did he dominate the Republican party on the Big Island?

JU: Well, he was the Republican party. You know, outside of the Big Five plantation managers, they really never had a very strong organization. They weren't—I don't think they had that burning desire, philosophically, you know, along Republican lines to build their party.

LM: So what happened when Doc Hill left the political scene? When was that?

JU: Oh, after he died, yeah. When he died, then Richard Henderson—Henderson then was the heir to his organization.

LM: And so did that leave the Republican party still strong as a result or . . .

JU: No, same thing. Same thing. And they tried desperately to reorganize and things of that sort, but unless they have, I don't know whether [President Ronald] Reagan helped them along. (Chuckles) But you know when Reagan was reelected, they had a sort of a Renaissance, whether that's going to hold up, I don't know. It all depends on the president, you know, the president is very strong. I suppose it filters down. But whether [President George] Bush can do it, I don't know. And I think they're still in the stage of trying to organize. They have individuals, new ones especially [who] came from the Mainland that want to be in a leadership position, but I think they're just in that stage. The election of [Big Island Mayor Bernard] Akana was just a mistake, you know. Whether they can do it again, I don't know. But it wasn't because of the Republican party that got him in. It's not because of their organization.

LM: How about you? When did you—you were helping Nelson Doi, you helped him in that first '54 campaign, when did you next get directly involved in campaigns?

JU: Well, '54, I don't know whether he ran again. I don't know whether he ran again, or. . . . But in '59, I ran because of statehood.

LM: What did you run for?

JU: For senate, first state senate, August '59.

LM: So were you running against Doi or . . .

JU: Oh yeah. There were five seats. (Chuckles) And I suppose he felt that I was a threat to him, too, huh. (Chuckles) You know how politicians are. (Laughs)

LM: How did you decide to run? How did you come to help Nelson? Where did you know him from?

JU: Well, I knew of him, but I never went to school with him.

LM: So how did you end up being his campaign manager?

JU: Well, because they thought I was smart because I was an attorney.

LM: Okay.

JU: You know when you get a law degree, they think you're great.

LM: So then the party recruited you to be his . . .

JU: Not the party, individually.

LM: Individuals.

JU: A group of us got together.

LM: So how did you decide to run yourself in '59 then?

JU: Well, in '59, there was this opening, you know, everything would start all over again. And then because of the background that I had, not that I really wanted to run, but people urged me to run, and I don't know why I did, but I said, "Yes." And I don't think Nelson was very happy. He thought I was a threat, you know, so, (chuckles) I have to start my own organization. (Chuckles) And he wasn't helpful at all. But I ran.

LM: How much did you spend in '59, would you guess?

JU: Gee, I can't—I can't say.

LM: Couple thousand, several thousand?

JU: Oh, several thousand. You know, just to print cards and all the brochures and things of that sort cost money, and you gotta sustain yourself traveling around the island. Gasoline costs money, you gotta have a car. (Chuckles)

LM: Was it still basically door-to-door and rallies-type stuff?

JU: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, 1959 was.

LM: By then the Democratic party was very strong, or not?

JU: The party, yes, the party was really organized, and they, the party itself, was very helpful as far as election is concerned because they're the ones that organized all the rallies. The party would be the ones that organized the grand rallies that we used to have. They're the ones that set up committees, tried to help overall. And we used to send our representatives to the party meetings to agree on all these things, setting it up. So the party, basically, did a great deal. I don't think anybody can run individually, our island, large as it is, by just your own organization. It has to be a, quote, Democratic organization. And all the top races, of course, would help a great deal. If there was a presidential race, then its organization is better. You know, you're starting from the top. If there's a governor's race, again, you know, the organization is better into putting all these individual—everybody had his own organization. They had their key people, you see. And you mesh that together, then all of a sudden, you can deliver.

LM: So the party didn't really have a role to play in deciding who the candidates would be? That was just sort of rough-and-tumble?

JU: Nah. Nobody can stop you. You say, "I want to run," you run. Oh, maybe they want to say that, well, we want—this part is, this candidate shouldn't have any competition at all or things of that sort, but I don't think they can dictate anything, say you can or cannot run. All what you do is get nomination papers, so many signatures, I think you pay twenty-five dollars, shout it and say you are. There you are. You're a candidate. It's open.

LM: Here you come to a rally, it's your turn to make a speech, what do you say?

JU: Well, it all depends where it is. Whether it's on a district level. You know, we used to have lots of fun. Just to give you a funny thing that happened once, you know, we used to travel around, and the Republicans used to go to our rally, used to have the same places we used to follow, okay. And there was Doc Hill running for office, and we got into Kona, and Kona coffee price was very depressed. And there was this fellow, Senator Kamau, Bill [William] Kamau, an old-timer. He was a Republican. I'm talking about the Republican rally, this is what I heard. And out in Kona, you speak Hawaiian because, basically, lots of these voters are Hawaiians. And Kamau would go up there making his speech in Hawaiian, see. Basically, what he was saying, he says, "You know this man is going to follow me, his name is Hill. Hills Brothers coffee." He says, "The reason why the price of coffee is so low is because of Hill." That's how funny campaign used to be. (Chuckles) And Doc Hill never used to know that, you know, because he [Kamau] used to speak in Hawaiian. (Laughs) But that's the kind of fun we used to have. You say what kind of speeches you make? You make your speeches according to what group you're talking to.

LM: So your local supporters would cue you in, yeah?

JU: That's right.

MK: What were some of the issues, though, back in '59?

JU: Well, we had our local issues as well as statewide issues, of course. We talked a great deal about education, statewide issues. But many things were very local, you know, about capital improvements, what we can do, the dollars that it would bring back, improvements here, water, sewer lines, you know. Because when we ran, we were still talking about basic infrastructure. Everything was still not developed to the extent, the roads. So these were bread-and-butter things that the people were interested in. On the higher level, of course, we spoke about improving the educational system. I can't think right now of the other statewide issues that we were talking about.

LM: Was land reform important on the Big Island as an issue?

JU: No, not [at] that time. Of course, you know, land use commission and the land use bill was passed later on [in 1963], but they weren't real concerns.

LM: Okay, maybe we've better switch tapes because I'm going to ask you about [John A.] Burns next.

MK: Okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is a continuation of the John Ushijima interview. This is videotape number four.

LM: Okay, this is tape four. When did you first meet John Burns?

JU: I met John Burns for the first time when I was in law school, about 1950. Burns was still a civilian. I think he worked for the city and county as a civil defense administrator, or one of those things, and occasionally, he used to come over to Washington [D.C.]. He was—I could tell that he wasn't one of those people that really knew his way around Washington. And because he knew Dan Inouye, and Dan was already married, Burns used to stay with me in my apartment near the Capitol, and that's when I got to know him. As a matter of fact, I used to cook for him, and that's what he recalls every time I see him, you know, that I make good stew.

(Laughter)

JU: The reason why I make stew is that I make a big potful, and that can last two, three days. (Chuckles) But Burns was—well, he never had money and he wasn't rich. And I think the kind of per diem that they used to give him was not sufficient, basically, you know, to live in a nice hotel, and go out and have fancy dinners. But there was Burns, you know, stayed with me, and I used to take care of him while he was in Washington. Cook for him, and that's when I got to know him.

LM: What sort of things was he saying about Hawai'i and the Democratic party, then?

JU: Well, I think at that time, he was active to a certain extent. But I don't think he ran for any office at that time yet, because after that, as I recall, he ran for delegate [to Congress]. And I remember working when I got back in the early [19]50s, I worked hard for his election as a



delegate [in 1954]. And he lost. [Burns first ran for delegate in 1948 and was defeated.] And I still remember the time after losing that I saw him, and not only me, but lots of people that worked, you know, with tears in our eyes, that we felt he should have been elected. I don't know who he lost to [Elizabeth Farrington]. But I think that was the beginning of John Burns. And he was a very likeable person, down-to-earth, you know. He knew what was hardship, and at the same time, of course, I think he had lots of friends here like Danny [Inouye] and Dan Aoki, and [Mike] Tokunaga, and all those people. And I think these were the people that were really back of Burns and using him as the title bearer of the Democratic party to really organize an organization. And basically, I think there were lots of veterans involved, too.

LM: What was he saying about the party and about the future of Hawai'i and so forth?

JU: You'd be surprised how well versed Burns was. You know, I don't think he was really a highly educated person, but he was very practical. And whenever you see a politician, you can more or less tell as to whether they're in there for themselves or whether they really are sincere about trying to make things better. And Burns was one of the few individuals, I felt, that had vision. I think that was one of the rare parts of Burns. He had a vision and he could see things, and he had an idea as to where Hawai'i should be. That's the reason why, you know, you talk about the kind of citizenry that we can create over here, and export and all of this. And I think he was very interested in education, University of Hawai'i. And here, here a man who never had a formal education.

And even in financing, he was very, very astute. He had visions about, you know, you just talk to him about insurance, he'll know. You talk to him about banking, he'll know. You talk to him about economics, he'll know. He'll give an idea as to where economics stood in this whole thing of trying to uplift people. That's the reason why lots of them started these finance companies. You know, they couldn't start a bank. Finance company, you control little monies and help people. And Burns was very strong in that. He was strong in opposition of foreign and big insurance companies or big banks coming in to take over the entire economy. He was well versed. You'd be surprised how much of a vision that he had as to what will be necessary to uplift the people. Because economically speaking, everything has to rise, you know. That's the reason why, I think they started, some of the people started Central Pacific Bank, City Bank. Unless you have access to money, it's silly; you can't start anything economically. And Burns was very good at that. But he was a man of vision. You'd be surprised how well he could think and how well he could see, you know.

LM: What was his vision for the outer islands?

JU: Oh, he was very strong. I think he talked about an integrated Hawai'i. Now that was the big fight that we had. Everything was O'ahu, and neighbor islands were out, scattered outside. And I think Burns talked about an integration of all our economies. He said, because you know, you have excise taxes based upon business production. And the monies are all raised over here. That's the reason why we have a hard time apportioning the monies.

You know, when I first got elected, I think Honolulu got 55 percent of excise taxes; Big Island got 20 percent; Maui, 15 percent; and Kaua'i 10; and that was the formula we used. And there were always, you know, you don't deserve that much money because that's all the money that you generate businesswise, you see. But Burns felt that we should start building up the neighbor islands, basically to build up the economy so that the excise taxes could be

generated all over. It was very hard those days because all the plantations, they had their headquarters over here [on O'ahu]. Even [though] they did their business there [on the neighbor islands], the receipts would be here in the general excise when they reported, all over here. It was a big fight. Well, we used to go along with the formula for a while until we found out that later on, you know, especially convinced these O'ahu legislators that it doesn't make sense. That Hawai'i can be strong only if you build up the neighbor islands, you see. You gotta start disbursing lots of these governmental things. You'll have to start moving around a little more. I don't know whether we came to that point, but we built up the University of Hawai'i in Hilo, and Burns was very strong in education. He was thinking about putting in Waimea, Kamuela, you know, building up the highways and apportioning the monies.

And basically, I think during our time, [Nadao] Yoshinaga was one big leader, too, when he was ways and means committee [chair], that from now on, when it comes to capital improvement, it's going to be based upon need. Upon need. That's the reason why we started breaking away from the structured 55 percent, 20 percent, 15, 10 percent. Based upon need. Roads, infrastructure. And this is what happened. Look at Maui today. Kā'anapali would never be what it is today, unless we put in the water and all the roads. And that was really planned, so you know, you got to get quite a bit of a generation of excise taxes. Slowly it's getting to be that way. In other words, the business activities in the neighbor islands are beginning to generate excise taxes, not only O'ahu.

LM: What was the attitude toward tourism?

JU: Hum?

LM: What was the attitude towards tourism in those early days, say, first few, '54, '58, '59 elections?

JU: What was the attitude toward what?

LM: Toward tourism.

JU: Tourism?

LM: Mm.

JU: Ah, well, we felt, at that time, that tourism was going to be the savior of our economy because, I think, the signs already showed that sugar and pineapple were not really going to be up there that long, and the only viable thing we saw was tourism. And during that period from statehood to what we have today, the increase in the number of tourists that came over is tremendous. And I suppose you have to do some rethinking right now, and people are rethinking as to how far we are going. But without tourism, I don't think we'd come this far.

LM: Was there a political motive for promoting tourism, too?

JU: I don't think so. I think just basically building up our economic base.

LM: Was it maybe seen as an alternative to the Big Five? I mean, you had won politically, but



economically, the Big Five was still very strong.

JU: No, I don't—no, I never thought of it along those lines because tourism, you take the Big Five, you say Big Five, Kā'anapali was purely Amfac, you know, those were all Amfac lands. And they were the ones, basically, who benefitted economically, from all of the sale of lands, et cetera. So I don't think it was basically a break out of the Big Five as an alternative in bringing tourism. I think the Big Five was on the way out, especially with the decline of pineapple, decline of sugar. They had to diversify. So no matter what we did, I think the handwriting was on the wall. Diversification for them.

LM: You wanted to ask about the [legislature]?

MK: Yeah, okay. You know when you first got into the [legislature], [William F.] Quinn was governor [1957-62]. I was wondering if you could give an assessment of Quinn as governor.

JU: Yeah, Governor Quinn was the titular head of the Republican party of that time. As far as the senate was concerned, we had strong individuals in there, very independent, and I don't think that they gave Quinn the kind of support that they would have given if they were really partisan-minded. You know, they gave him a very bad time. And Quinn was new. He was a neophyte, too. He really didn't know politics too much. I supposed he learned, was capable enough, but he didn't get reelected.

MK: And that was a Republican senate that he was working with.

JU: That's right. That's where Doc Hill was the president.

MK: What would be your assessment of Doc Hill as president of the senate back in those early years?

JU: Well, Doc was a very practical man, you know. He listens to what he wants to hear, and closes his ears when he didn't want to hear anything. You know, he used to have that ear aids on. And being very practical, we used to give him a bad time, Democrats, because I think we were more vocal. (Chuckles) And we had pretty good people in there, you know, very, very remarkable people. We gave 'im bad time, but we're still friends. In those days, we used to have fun. We used to fight, but we never used to take things personally like they do today. Everything was on a very high level. You know, we used to party together, we used to go to teahouses together, you know, laugh. They had good people on the other side, too, you know, people like Senator [Yasutaka] Fukushima. He was good. I have lot of respect for him, very capable. On our side, we had very capable people, too.

LM: Why do they call Doc Hill, "Doc"?

JU: Well he used to dispense glasses. The story is that when he first came to the island of Hawai'i, he was an eyeglass peddler. You know, he never had a degree or anything else. He wasn't even an optician or optometrist, but he used to go out in the country as a salesman and used to sell these glasses, non-prescriptive glasses. You can't read, then hey, you try this. They look at 'em, this is nothing but enlarged, I mean, magnified glasses. People look at it, oh, they buy it. That's how he made his money. He was a salesman. That's how he got his name, "Doc." (Chuckles) You never knew that, huh?

LM: No.

(Chuckles)

JU: You know, he was a peddler.

LM: Then he built up his other businesses.

JU: Oh, he was very shrewd, yeah.

LM: What sort of businesses did he have?

JU: Oh, he had a Coca-Cola company. He had a big laundry. He had a realty investment company, real estate. He had theaters. He was all over. He had a car franchise, GM [General Motors], I think it was. You know, so he was island-wide.

LM: Did he leave all this to his family or what happened when he died?

JU: I think his widow is still alive, Ouida, she's pretty old. Well, she was something, too, you know, she's very shrewd. I think she lives in Honolulu someplace. She had one daughter. [Hill had two daughters according to *Men and Women of Hawai'i*.] I don't know what happened to her. She lives up in the Mainland. But he died a rich man.

MK: You know, going back to that, your first session in the legislature, I was wondering how did you do as a freshman senator? How did you manage?

JU: Well, I know my limitations, you know, and no matter what I knew about having people elected, campaigns and everything else, still, when you get into government and really do something, you gotta know a great deal. You gotta know the—I think for me it was very fortunate because the first thing we did was reorganization. All the departments, and you have to study what they do. You gotta know functions, where the monies are, people, bodies, and everything else. And this is the most important thing. If you want to do something, you gotta know government, you gotta know the departments, you gotta know all of the various things, the assignments, the things that they do. And I just learned because we were doing that. Outside of that, if I never [knew] anything, I used to keep my mouth shut because there were more learned people with experience. And during those days, I think we were very conscious of the fact that when you're new, you're seen, but not heard.

MK: How long did it take before you got to that point where . . .

JU: You can really step on the floor and make speeches? Oh, take one, two sessions. Otherwise you get, you know. In the senate, those days, we had capable people, and you don't want to feel like a damn fool going out and making a long speech unless you knew what it was all about. We were very conscious of that, or at least I was. I can't go over there and expound on anything or protest on anything else unless I really knew. So making speeches was very seldom the first year.

MK: And back then, who were the Democratic leaders in the senate?

JU: I don't know who was the majority leader. [In the 1959 state senate, Republican Hebden Porteus was vice-president and majority floor leader and Francis Ching was majority leader.]

LM: I remember . . .

JU: Well, we had a minority [floor] leader [Sakae Takahashi].

LM: You remember what committees you were on when you started?

JU: Yeah, I was civil service, I was on the ways and means.

LM: You were on ways and means your very first session? Isn't that unusual?

JU: Let me see. I don't know what session that was. I was ways and means—no, it can't be, because I was, when [George] Ariyoshi was ways and means chairman [in 1963], I was a member. I was in judiciary [in 1967]. Civil service, I remember.

LM: Okay, we have to switch tapes now and then I want to ask you a lot about that.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 17-26-1-89; SIDE ONE

JC: The following is continuation of the John Ushijima interview that took place on October 27, 1989. This is videotape number five.

MK: Okay. This is tape number five with Senator Ushijima. Okay, we want to continue with the [19]60s, and it seems like when you look at the literature, they focus a lot on the factionalism in the senate. First of all, back in '63, you have the division between the [Nelson] Doi and the [Nadao] Yoshinaga factions. Can you comment about the differences that there were that existed back then?

JU: Yeah, I think it goes back to being either pro-Burns or in the [John] Burns faction, or [Thomas] Gill faction. And the Burns faction, of course, was influenced a great deal by the ILWU. So you know, you had that. And Nelson, I think, was more with the, quote, either independent or more on the Gill faction because lots of these cleavages that came in about when we organized the senate, you could very easily see that the, quote, Gill faction was here and the Burns and the ILWU faction on this side. And that's how we organized the senate.

MK: And was that Burns faction same as the ILWU faction or were . . .

JU: Not quite, not quite, not quite because, I wouldn't say that I'm an ILWU man, but I come from the island where the ILWU is very strong. And perhaps I might be guided or influenced to that extent. But I never considered myself an ILWU man. As a matter of fact, I've been very critical of some of the things that they do. But, I think it just fell in there. I was never close to Tom Gill or that faction.

LM: Did they have programmatic differences? I mean, did they—Burns folks want to do one thing, and Gill folks another, or was it just sort of a battle for power?

JU: Power.

LM: Power?

JU: Politics is power. Everybody wants to have power, and that's what it is. Either you're on the inside or you're on the outside. Guys who got the power on the inside, without power on the outside. Politics is nothing but that, and they use all kind of philosophical differences and everything else, but basically, it's power.

MK: And then, you know, another cleavage that they talked about would be the neighbor islanders versus the O'ahu senators. How did that work out in terms of organizing the senate in those days?

JU: Yeah, I think that came about a great deal, it influenced us a great deal because, naturally, being from the neighbor islands, we wanted to control as many of the committees as possible, especially the important committees—ways and means, judiciary, especially. And the neighbor islands, we understand each other very well.

LM: What are the differences? How---why do you understand each other better than the O'ahu guys?

JU: Well, because we come from across the sea. (Laughs) Well, we're not part of the (chuckles) . . .

LM: What specific differences are there? I mean, you guys had some things you wanted that they didn't want?

JU: Oh, yeah, well, you know, our needs are different. You know, we need school buildings, CIP [capital improvement project] monies and things of that sort. We understand each other so much easier. On O'ahu, you had so many things over here, it's just getting improvements of what you already have. We don't even have all those things there, you see, so. Neighbor islanders are basically, we understood. We sort of helped each other out.

LM: Did you hang out together a lot during the session?

JU: No, not necessarily. Not necessarily. But we, we had a tendency of being able to see each other more often because, you know, when we come to O'ahu, we don't have our families here. We might stay at a hotel [so], naturally, it's easier for us to meet with a fellow neighbor islander than being invited to a senator's home in Honolulu, which never occurs or never did occur, or very seldom. You know, when they're through, they go home to their families or to their work. And we're over here, either in our office, or we have to go out to dinner. We have dinners together, so it's very convenient. It's natural that we get to know each other a little better.

LM: What would you say were the most important programs that the legislature pushed through in the [19]60s? When Burns came into office, now you have the entire legislature Democratic,

you have your mentor and good friend, stew eater, the governor. How did things come out then?

JU: Well, I think during those days, money was—I wouldn't say plentiful, but the economy was pretty good. I think we built and poured in quite a bit of money for the university system. In retrospect, I wish that we spent the money a little more wisely, especially seeing all the buildings that we have over here. I think we could have done a better job, you know, but quite a bit of money was spent on our higher education system.

Of course, we, during the [19]60s, we created the community college system. And I think now, people can see that it was one of the better things that we did [in 1964]. You know, you have a student body throughout the system of about what, about 40,000? Close to 40,000, and I can just see what Hawai'i would be if we just started today and tried to make higher education accessible to as many people as possible. During those days, I know they were very strongly trying to keep our tuition rates as low as possible because the monies came in from general excise [taxes], and we never felt that we should use the tuition as a means of raising revenues. And this is still the battle that I have with the board of regents. You know, today, you get lots of these people that come in and say that we got to start balancing the budget, et cetera, et cetera. So, the tuition rates should be raised, et cetera, and I'm on the opposite side. My feeling is that we should keep it as low as possible.

Because our population is a little different today. You know, we have so many immigrants coming in, and all these kids are entitled to a higher education. Sure, the community college is free and open, but when you get into the four-year colleges, you know, well, I think every dollar counts, and you get these refugees and their families all over, and I think we're still in a position whereby we should be cognizant of the fact that these people need as much financial aid as possible to get into higher education. And once we start raising it [tuition], I'm afraid that people are going to start thinking that we're going to use that as a vehicle to balance budgets. You see, we get it from the general fund, and so far, I think [John] Waihee [governor, 1986-1994] has been very nice in giving us the monies. But if we ever come to think about trying to balance it with what other state institutions do, well, we're going to get lost. I still feel that we should keep it as minimal as possible on a tuition basis of students getting in.

LM: What were the other major programs that you, you know, felt that Burns and the Democratic majority were . . .

JU: Well, I think, you know, in the labor field, minimum wage and all these other things that we did, I think we were foremost in the nation. I think labor really got a break.

LM: Besides minimum wage, what other—you remember specifics?

JU: Oh, workman's comp [worker's compensation], unemployment comp, all of these things, I think, we were really way up in the top, and as far as the other forty-eight states were concerned—forty-nine states. And I think this is one area that the Democratic administration really moved ahead. But now, of course, you know, it's the other forces coming into play. I think lots of these other matters, you know, like codification of the criminal laws, the no-fault [automobile] insurance, I think these are all—land use, land use bills that we passed, I think, these are all major, major bills. The infrastructure that we built for all of the islands, I think,

is something that we can be proud of, for Hawai'i to be what it is today.

MK: You know, in those [19]60s and the early [19]70s, how did the Burns administration work with the legislature to get their program implemented?

JU: Very close. Burns used to work very closely with us. It was easy for us to go talk to Burns because he understood, really, about the integration of the whole economy, about neighbor islands, and things of that sort. He was very cognizant. And it was easy for us to go up there and talk to him. As a matter of fact, he made himself very accessible. When he was at his home there [at Washington Place], you know, in the morning, breakfast and everything else, we could drop in and have breakfast with him. It wasn't anything formal. As a matter of fact, he used to welcome us. We just called him up, say, "We're coming over," you know, that's it. He was very accessible. He was a regular man. I give him lots of credit as I start thinking of him, as to the kind of person he was. You know, he was decent on top of that. He was clean, but he was very decent. He was a family man. You don't find that kind of people around too often.

LM: Were there any times when you found yourselves disagreeing with him, strongly?

JU: Oh, yeah. (Chuckles)

LM: What would happen then? Or can you think of a specific . . .

JU: Oh, I used to yell at him sometimes. I forgot what I said. I can't think of one.

LM: But like you said, he wouldn't take it personally?

JU: Oh, no.

(Laughter)

LM: Were---I'm curious.

JU: No, no he wouldn't take it personally.

LM: Were there any long-standing disagreements on policy, say, between Burns and the Democratic majority in the legislature, or were they just things that came up once in a while and were resolved?

JU: Oh, every once in a while.

LM: But generally . . .

JU: Well, we used to, oh yeah, we used to disagree with him on appointments, you know. I used to be judiciary chairman, and I remember once that, I think, supreme court appointment [in 1974], I wanted Yasutaka Fukushima, a Republican. And he wanted Mrs. [Betty] Vitousek at that time. And she was new. And I didn't feel that she was capable enough to be sitting up there, and I opposed that. As a matter of fact, I killed it.



(Laughter)

JU: You know. He and I disagreed over it. Oh, we used to have lots of stuff like that. He called me in, and I said I can't buy that, you know.

LM: How would you compare him to, say, [George] Ariyoshi in his style?

JU: Don't ask me about Ariyoshi, that's a different story. Comparisons, oh, they were night and day.

MK: How effective was Ariyoshi in getting his programs implemented through the leg [legislature]?

LM: Or where were you in getting access to him?

JU: No, not Ariyoshi. He had his own favorites, yeah. I don't think he had any foresight at all, so. I don't want to say anything about him. Let's talk about Burns.

MK: Okay. (Chuckles) Let's see. Oh, I was wondering, you know, Burns had his agenda, his program for the state. Who in the legislature was responsible for having an agenda from the legislature for the state?

JU: Oh, the president.

MK: So in your days, you had Doc Hill then [Nelson] Doi, then [Kazuhisa] Abe . . .

JU: Well, we, what happens is that, like today, you know, the governor comes down with his program, then he brings it down to the majority, and it's up to the majority to either push that program through, or have our own program. And when Burns used to be there, you know, the department heads, all these programs would come down. We sat down, and set forth what we call is the Democratic program, together with the administration program. We used to work very well together, at that time. Now, even to this day, they still do that, but they don't have any kind of program at all, especially the administration program, you know, certain things. As far as the majority is concerned, I don't know what kind of programs they have. It's more individual things that they do. That's the reason why you don't have too much effective legislation being passed. You know, far-reaching legislation down the line. Oh, that requires lots of discipline, lots of selling, and lots of understanding . . .

LM: So Burns . . .

JU: Because, you know, you have to—everybody, they're so selfish, that they want to have all the pie and eat it too. But certain things, you have to have programs down the line. You can't do it today. You know, you have to, otherwise, you'll never get things done.

MK: I think one political observer said that up till your time, when you left the presidency of the senate [in 1979], there was a style of politics operating in the senate, that they called consensus style.

JU: That's right. We used to have our programs. You have to give in, no individuals are bigger than the program.

MK: How did that operate? How was that achieved?

JU: Well, that's my job. You know, my leaders and everything else, we have our—we set our programs early, and these are the things, you know, that we're going to start moving along. You take energy, we had to look down the line, and we had to start working as to make ourselves more efficient, you know, self-sufficient, and these are the programs you push through. You don't overnight, then this will be something. You take the Kaka'ako redevelopment that is being put aside. Now, to me, Kaka'ako was the heart of Honolulu. When you clear that thing up, you're going to have a new city. You know, Kaka'ako redevelopment and everything else. You see, these are all programs. You see, it goes down to, you have to lay the groundwork and understanding as to what you're trying to accomplish. See, these are all programs, see, so.

LM: To get them to fly politically, don't you have to, I mean, before a session even starts, don't you have to sell it to the chairs and members . . .

JU: Oh, yeah. We have majority meetings. All the bills, I put the bills together, and these are the bills that have to be passed, to accomplish what we [are going to] try to accomplish.

LM: So you have bargaining even before the session began on that probably. People . . .

JU: Not bargaining. Not bargaining, I think it's a matter of knocking heads. You have to have discipline. You can't have a program with twenty-five individuals thinking in their own way. Certain basic programs, you have to have it lying down and all of that. You knock heads. Anybody opposes, then you put 'em on the side. He's a bad boy, he gotta learn some more. Bring him in later on. But no man, one man, you're going to stop that. Well, that's how you control the senate, you know. Without programs, you get nothing done. Far-reaching programs, I'm talking about. And it takes lots of discipline. You going to get prima donnas in there, you'll never get anything done, you know.

LM: We better switch tapes. I want to continue on this, so.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is the last videotape with John Ushijima. This is videotape number six.

LM: This is tape six. Senator, could you give us your thoughts on how the president [of the senate] has to act to get the program through?

JU: Well, the president is the one that has basic responsibility for the operations of the senate. And naturally, when you get elected, you get elected for what? To do good for the people, good as you see it, and to others, it might be bad. But that is done by having programs enacted into law. And when you start out a senate, of course as a president, you're the guiding light, and you have to view in your opening statements, or opening speeches, you see the economy as to where we are, what're the problems we face, how we're going to meet these problems, et cetera. Now, these are all brought out, or you try to, at least. Then in the course of the session, you know the Democratic majority would get together and start saying, okay, these are our programs. These are things that we want to accomplish. They call it the Democratic program. The Republicans would have their own program, too. The whole idea



basically is to accomplish that, whether it's done this session, but as you see down the line, you build the framework, basically, to accomplish these things. And in the senate, that's the president's responsibility. You know, he has his majority leader, he's got his majority floor leader, he has all his committees. And his job, basically, is to see that these people are operating properly, that the bills, as far as the party bills are concerned, are being pushed all the way through. Otherwise, what are you going to say after this session? What did we accomplish? And at the end of the session, you can say, well, these are the things we accomplished. It might not be the end, yet, but we see it going down the pipeline.

LM: How do you make sure it keeps flowing?

JU: Well, it's a matter of knowing the individuals and following through as to what they're doing. You know, everybody has his own style and his own ideas as how things are being done. (Chuckles) As a president, you should know what they're doing, when they're going to do it. Whether they're sabotaging it, or whether they're backing the programs, well, these are part of your responsibility and your job as to how to accomplish what you want done.

LM: Supposing they're sabotaging it, then what?

JU: Well, maybe you put 'em on the blacklist, huh.

LM: And what happens to them on the blacklist?

JU: Well, you go there, and you tell [them], "Hey, you know, these things aren't moving." Or, you might have a caucus, and they might bring it out, and say, "Look, things are not moving and we got our deadlines and everything else," and you know, and he might be persuaded. Well, eventually these [who've] not [been] good boys---and there are other means of handling it later on. Might be not being reappointed to the committee, or little things that we have, about. . . . He wants that little trip here and there, you know, you control the funds. "No, you're not entitled to any trip." There's ways of doing it. But everybody wants to be cooperative, unless they have a strong feeling as to why, and you want to find out why. And of course, you gotta respect that, too.

LM: How would you compare that, the personnel, then to now?

JU: Oh, I don't know how they operate today, but when I was in the senate, you get elected and you're your own boss. In other words, you make the final decisions. I notice that ever since, well, during my time, too, and a little later on, senators have a tendency of not making up their own minds. You can't talk to them because they won't or cannot discuss problems or situations or anything, [or] a bill. It's always that, "I'll have to go back and check with my staff." So when you start doing that, and all of a sudden, it's not the senator who makes the decision, but it's always somebody else, either the staff, somebody from the outside. And to me, that was very irksome. Because as a senator, you go there, you know, you want to talk head to head with the person as to what the problem is, why is your position, why, why, why, because you want to find out. But if that person cannot discuss anything with you, then you're lost. You can never get any kind of commitment. And this is, I think, is the big danger today, of people getting elected. And they'll never make up their minds, and they'll never give you an answer because they say, "I'll have to check with my staff."

We never used to do that before. Before, you know, we get elected, well, we're the ones responsible, so you can talk to somebody, then you'll know that he's making his own basic decision. He might say, that well, you know, "I believe this. However, why don't I check up with my staff first before I give you my commitment," or things of that sort, but not today. Lots of outside influences come in today, outside. And this is the way, I think, it's being operated today, and I think it's bad. I don't know whether it's the caliber, but I don't know whether—the way they look at the responsibility, perhaps, is different, I don't know. But it's not a guy who sits in there, who's supposed to make the ultimate decision, making decisions as he sees fit, or what he thinks.

LM: You think there's less urgency now, that so much has been accomplished?

JU: No. Perhaps it's the makeup of the people that we elect today. They all think they're very smart, you know. They get a law degree, then they know everything.

MK: Senator, I've got two questions. One has to do with the outside interests or influences that are acting upon the leg [legislature] nowadays. Back in '78, you were quoted as saying that, you know, in '78, there was not just—not one lobby group that was as strong as the ILWU once was. Can you elaborate on that?

JU: Well, during my experience, the ILWU had a lobbyist over there, a fellow by the name of [Edward] DeMello. And he was a lobbyist that lobbied for ILWU on labor matters, you know. And you used to respect him for that. He was not there working for himself, or for personal things, or things of that sort. It was for all the ILWU program. It was very easy to deal with these people because they were lobbyists, espousing the ILWU position. Later on, I see that so many things become very clouded because these lobbyists, I'm not talking about the ILWU, the other lobbyists do, they simply get all personal into, you know, they get a personal interest in what they're doing. Might be they're representing some land use commission on this, and it got very clouded. And this is what I say, is that when you see a lobbyist doing the work that he's supposed to do, you can respect him for it. But when you cloud that lobbyist with other interests that he has, then all of sudden, to me, it's very clouded, and I don't know where he's coming from.

LM: So you didn't have the experience of people trying to push private bills type stuff, where that would benefit just their company or something like that?

JU: Oh, there were. If you know, if they're doing that, it's all right, but not under the guise of another organization, because they're the powerful ones. Right?

LM: So you mean people are just trying to get ahead personally by being a lobbyist?

JU: Oh, today, you find too many of them.

MK: And one more question. You know, you retired from the senate in '82, and at the time, you were saying that you had come from a different era.

JU: That's right.

MK: And that you felt that you should retire because the problems of today were different from the

ones that you dealt with when the state was going through a transitional period. What did you see as the problems being faced back in '82 and now?

JU: Well, I think I felt that we did the framework for statehood, ever since statehood, framework of government, and I think we've moved along. But as I saw people coming into the legislature, all these young ones, you know, and I was young once, too, so I empathize with them, too, but they were different. It's hard for me to relate to them anymore. And I felt that when you come to that already, you might as well start moving out.

LM: What do you see as the main problems facing us now?

JU: Today? I think the problem still is the building up of the neighbor islands. What we want to do, I think the county-state relationship is something that we have to look at very carefully. You know, they're still talking about not being able to have their own financing powers. The whole---those counties are growing, and whether we can still do what we've been doing before, handouts every session, whether that's good, or whether we should start giving them power, self rule, so to speak. I think a question really has to be raised as to where we're going insofar as how far are we going with tourism, whether the neighbor islands should be built to handle the kind of impact that we feel that's going to happen. On Kaua'i they're thinking about that. On our island, I think they're talking about that, Moloka'i they're thinking about that. I think all of these far-ranging things, I think you have to have people sit down and decide, really, where we're going. We've come this far; now it's a refinement. Do we entrench? What is the economy like? Where're we going to shore our economy, if tourism itself is going to start either disintegrating or become soft, because we're so dependent on tourism today, jobwise. I think our economy is still very fragile, you see. If we just say tourism is the basis of what we have today, and I can just see that if anything happens, it's going to be a big problem.

LM: So we need more diversification?

JU: Diversification, yeah, we've been talking about that for a long time, you know. But whether we're accomplishing it, is another thing. Well, I think down the line, I think we should have lots of people sit down and really get the good brains together. And I think [John] Waihee, I don't know whether he's trying to do that, I know he's having lots of conferences.

LM: [Waihee] had those conferences, yeah.

JU: Conferences and everything else, but I think it's high time that we had people with a vision who can sit down and really steer Hawai'i into a better place. You know, because we've changed tremendously, the demography, the population has changed, and we get new kinds of people coming in, and these are all creating big problems. The relationship between the newcomers and the old, those things.

LM: Especially on the Big Island, yeah?

JU: Yeah. The Hawaiian problem because they're beginning to feel that they've been left out in so many things, and you gotta address all these things. Otherwise, it won't be a paradise.

LM: So it must be really amazing to look back and see how much things have changed.

JU: Oh, we've changed tremendously. (Chuckles) When I got elected, I think we only had about—how many tourists?—a million tourists, less than a million tourists coming.

LM: Well, I mean just in general, the whole scene from when, say, when you graduated high school to now, the change has just been incredible.

JU: Yeah, that's why I live in Hilo. (Chuckles) Because it never changed to that extent. The people are still the same, because we're not, we don't have that impact of tourism. We have lots of impact [on] people living around the outlying districts, but we don't have that kind of impact like you have on Waikīkī or Kona or Maui, yet.

LM: But everything else has changed here, not just tourism. The politics has changed completely, everything has changed.

JU: Oh, yeah. Yes.

LM: Did you folks have any inkling of—I mean, Burns had a vision, you said, but did you folks have any image that it would have changed to this extent? Did you envision thirty years of the Democrats pretty much running things, I mean, any change of that magnitude?

JU: Well, I think we expected changes. There were so many things that we wanted to retain as much as possible, you know, the things that we wanted to retain, control of the judiciary, you know, for local people. We wanted to retain the vote, I mean, the residency, but all these things have been taken out as unconstitutional. So I think, well, personally, I feel that change is inevitable. I only hope for, is whether it's for the better or the good. I don't think you can resist change. It's going to come. This the modern age, you know, we never had jets before, we get jets now. We get fax machines. Can you imagine? You know, everything has changed. And we got to roll along. I don't think we can be so—the backward thing to say that, you know, we want to get back to the old days; it's gone, it's not here. You've got to be realistic to that sense. But under the circumstances, how we're going to preserve as much as we'd like to preserve, and certain things, it's worth preserving. Big problems, yet. Problems never end.

LM: Okay, well, thank you Senator, we appreciate all your time.

JU: Thank you.

MK: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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